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ABSTRACT

The Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) strives to assist and guide high school students from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds to better realize their educational and vocational potential. A major object of this study was to learn more about factors relevant to the educational adjustment of NYC enrollees. All the enrollees who attended counseling sessions during a three week period were studied. There were 41 boys and 67 girls, with an average age of 16.5. All subjects (Ss) were enrolled in school between the seventh and twelfth grades except for three Ss who were enrolled in special classes. The modal grade was 10.5. The enrollees were administered a 19-item seven-point rating scale during one of their regular group counseling sessions. The scale indicates educational aspirations, educational barriers, and attitude to school. The NYC counselors rated the behavior of Ss on a 10-item scale measuring behavior problems and attitudes that could be labeled aggressive and antisocial. Nearly all the enrollees were found to aspire to complete high school, although less than half aspire to go to college. Males had more behavioral problems than females. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (JM)

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Educational Attitudes and Behavior Problems in Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) Enrollees*

Sherman Eisenthal, Ph.D. and Andra Strauss

The NYC strives to assist and guide high school students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds to better realize their educational and vocational potential. Essential to effective educational counseling is an understanding of the psychological characteristics of this population, their educational motivation, their access to goals . . . and their response to their school experience. In a previous study (Eisenthal & Sherman, 1969) it was established that this population tends to be more socially immature and to have greater achievement problems than high school students in general. They responded to the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) more like high school drop-outs than like the average high school student. A major objective of this study was to learn more about factors relevant to the educational adjustment of NYC enrollees. We planned to direct our attention to behavior problems and hostile-aggressive attitudes amoung the enrollees which we assumed are significant correlates of a poor academic adjustment and dropping out behavior. Although no hypotheses were formally developed, we expected that behavior problems would be associated with task-centered variables such as educational aspiration and educational barriers. In addition, we expected that a more global, socio-emotional variable, liking for school, would correlate with school adjustment.

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* Paper presented at the Eastern Psychological Association meeting at Atlantic City, New Jersey, April, 1970.

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METHOD

Subjects. All the enrollees who attended counseling sessions during a three-week period were studied. There were 41 boys and 67 girls, ranging in age from 14 to 19. The mean age for boys was 16, and for girls, 17. All Ss were enrolled in school between the 7th and 12th grades except for 3 Ss who were enrolled in special classes. The modal grade for boys was the 10th, and for girls the 11th.

Procedure. The enrollees were administered a 19-item, 7-point rating scale during one of their regular group counseling sessions. It took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The scale contains items measuring (a) educational aspirations, (b) educational barriers, and (c) attitude to school. The NYC counselors rated the Ss behavior on a 10-item scale measuring (a) behavior problems that could be labeled aggressive behavior and (b) aggressive anti-social attitudes.

RESULTS

We shall first describe the enrollees' responses to the rating of educational aspirations and barriers, and the counselors rating of the enrollees on aggressive behavior and attitudes. Then we shall examine the interplay between these and other variables.

Insert Table 1

Table 1 presents the percentage of agreement on the scales of educational aspirations and barriers.

We found that most (95%) of the enrollees want to complete high school (item #7), but less than half of them (44%) want to go on to college (items #12 and #17). Most of the enrollees do not report barriers to completing high school on time (87%), item #8. However, almost half of them feel they would neither be accepted by a college (47%) nor be able to do college work (49%), (items #2 and #3).

Insert Table 2

Table 2 presents the distribution of percentages of the counselors' ratings of behavior problems and problem attitudes. The counselors rated 35% of the enrollees as expressing some problem behavior, although only approximately 10% manifested such behavior consistently. The counselors rated 45% of the enrollees as expressing some degree of anti-social attitudes, although less than 20% expressed such attitudes consistently. I would like to add that 49% of the males and 27% of the females manifested some behavior problems, 19% of the males consistently and 8% of the females consistently.

We found that behavior problems and attitudes did not correlate with the educational aspiration (r= .17) and educational barriers (r= .15). Behavior problems correlated (r=.39) with liking for school. It is noteworthy that the educational barriers scale did not correlate with liking for school, variables assumed to be linked.

Analysis of variance of the aggressive behavior and attitude measures were performed with respect to aspiration, barriers and sex. We were particularly concerned with the pattern of sex differences and possible interactions. Past research indicated that females respond quite differently than male enrollees.

Insert Figure 1

A 2 x 3 analysis of variance of the aggressive behavior measure, sex by educational barriers, yielded a signigicant main effect for sex (F 5.30 $p < .05$) and a significant interaction effect (F 3.08, $p < .01$). The pattern of means is presented in Figure 1.

We can see that males and females do not differ much in aggressive behavior for low and medium barrier levels; for the high barrier level, however, males manifest significantly more aggressive behavior and the females show non-significantly less aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior in females is thus unrelated to educational barriers. The analysis of variance of the attitude measure yielded no significant effects.

Insert Figure 2

A 2 x 3 analysis of variance of aggressive behavior, sex by educational aspiration, yielded a significant main effect for sex (F 5.08, $p < .05$) but none for aspiration or the interaction effect; on the attitude measure, no significant effects were found. Figure 2 presents the pattern of means for aggressive behavior with respect to sex and educational aspirations. The males differed from the females in aggressive behavior where educational aspirations are at low and medium

levels; they do not differ when the aspirations are high level. Aggressive behavior in females appears unrelated to educational aspirations.

Let us now consider the analysis of variance of aggressive behavior and attitudes with regard to sex and liking for school. We found siginificant effects for the behavior measure but not for the attitude measure. The analysis of variance of the aggressive behavior measure yielded a significant main effect for sex ($F=5.50$, $p < .05$) and for liking school ($F=5.84$, $p < .01$) but not for the interaction. Both males and females manifest more aggressive behavior when the liking for school is low than when it is at medium or high levels. (See Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3

DISCUSSION

There are two aspects of the results which we should like to discuss: (1) the implications of the magnitude of response to the measure of aspiration and barriers, and (2) the sex differences in the relationship between behavior problems and educational variables.

The fact that nearly all the enrollees aspire to complete high school but less than half aspire to go to college requires evaluation. On the one hand, the counselors, fortunately, do not have the task of motivating the enrollees to aspire to complete high school. On the other hand, the counselors do not know what their objectives should be in response to the enrollees relatively low level of college

aspiration. The fact that 49% of the enrollees do not feel able to do college work reinforces reason for concern and raises certain implications. On the adaptive side, one might infer that this pattern represents a realistic and mature appraisal of interests and abilities; an outcome which, if true, would not be of major concern to the counselors. On the maladaptive side, which is where some suggestive data lies, one is led to infer that this pattern reflects self doubt, intellectual inefficiency, and social immaturity, factors which are of concern to the counselors. Past research on this population, using the CPI, supports the inference of lowering of aspiration and increased barriers may be due to social immaturity and intellectual inefficiency.

Let us now turn to the data on sex differences. I shall summarize the pattern. Males had more behavioral problems than females. And the behavioral problems, for males, were contingent on both the task-centered aspects of education - measured by aspirations and barriers - and the socio-emotional aspect of education - measured by liking for school. For the females, however, behavior problems were contingent only on the socio-emotional aspect - liking for school. One implication is that these findings represent a specific instance of generalized sex differences - males are more task-oriented and more external in their response to frustration than females. In other words, NYC females are both less frustrated because of a lower level of ego involvement in educational achievement and are less likely to manifest responses to frustration externally. A somewhat different

implication, though not mutually exclusive with the first one, is that NYC females manifest fewer behavior problems than males because they are more socialized and better able to cope with their educational situation. The more adaptive and socialized males eligible for NYC may seek other settings to supplement income. There is some indirect evidence to support this implication - the females were older than the males and CPI data on a different NYC population suggested that the males were more immature than the females.

A careful evaluation of the correlates of college aspiration and barriers such as ability is required to answer the questions raised. At present, it would seem that counseling for males would be directed more to maturational/ self regard issues and for females academic motivation.

* * * * *

Reference:

Eisenthal, S. & Sherman, L., "Psychological Characteristics of Neighborhood Youth Corp Enrollees". Journal of Consulting Psychology 33:420-424, 1969.

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF AGREEMENT ON SCALES OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION AND BARRIERS

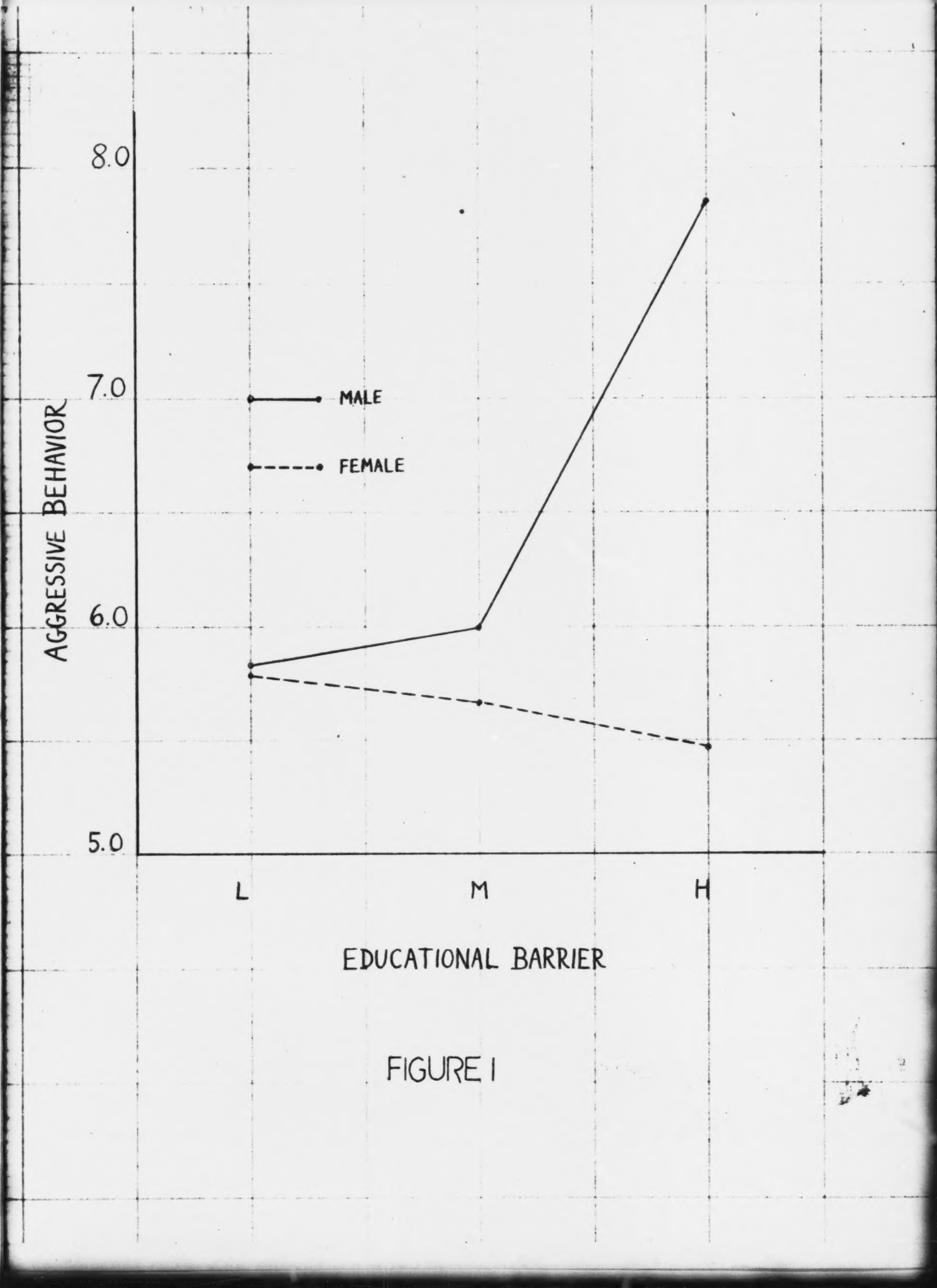
	Scale	% Agree	% Disagree
	Educational Barriers		
2.	My chance of being accepted by a college is poor.	47	53
3.	I can do college work.	51	49
4.	I am able to keep up with my subjects in school.	93	7
8.	I will be able to graduate from high school on time.	87	13
13.	I am not being prepared in high school to do college work.	51	48
	Educational Aspirations		
5.	Graduating from high school on time is important to me.	95	5
7.	A high school diploma is not important to have.	3	96
12.	Going to college is very important to me.	44	55
17.	A college diploma is not so important as many people claim.	12	87

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENTAGES IN COUNSELOR'S RATING OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AND HOSTILE ATTITUDES

Scale	Ratings 1	2	3	4
Aggressive Behavior				
1. Behavior problems in school	70	19	7	3
2. Gets into fights	87	9	3	2
5. Truancy	85	8	5	3
8. Destroys property	93	4	3	1
10. In trouble with police	95	2	1	2
Aggressive Attitudes				
3. Sarcastic	79	12	8	1
4. Resentful	69	19	10	3
6. Quick temepr	88	8	1	3
7. Defiant	83	8	8	2
9. Argumentative	82	6	10	2

NOTE: 1=Never
2=Seldom
3=Occasionally
4=Frequently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AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
MALE
FEMALE
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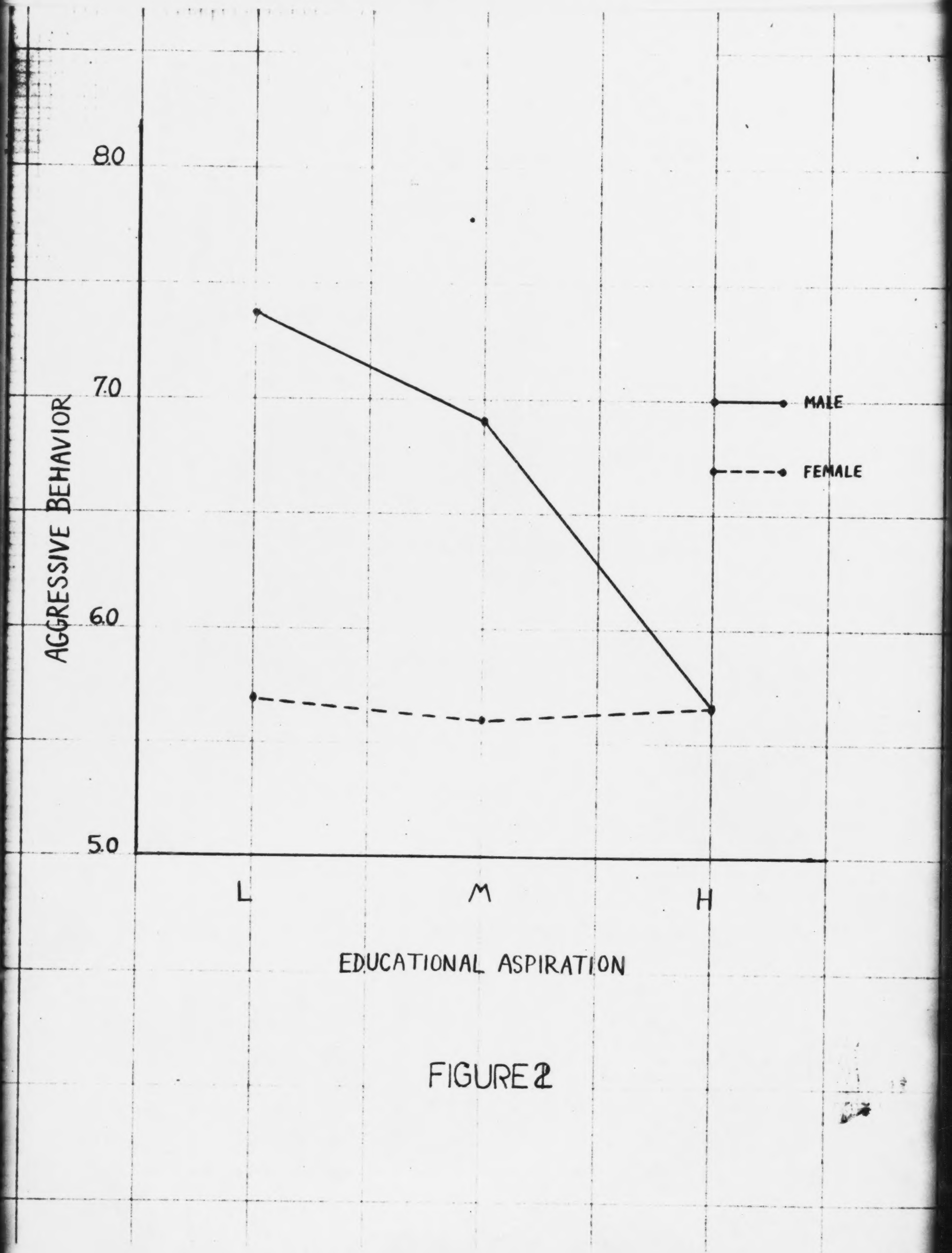
EDUCATIONAL BARRIER

FIGURE 1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AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
MALE
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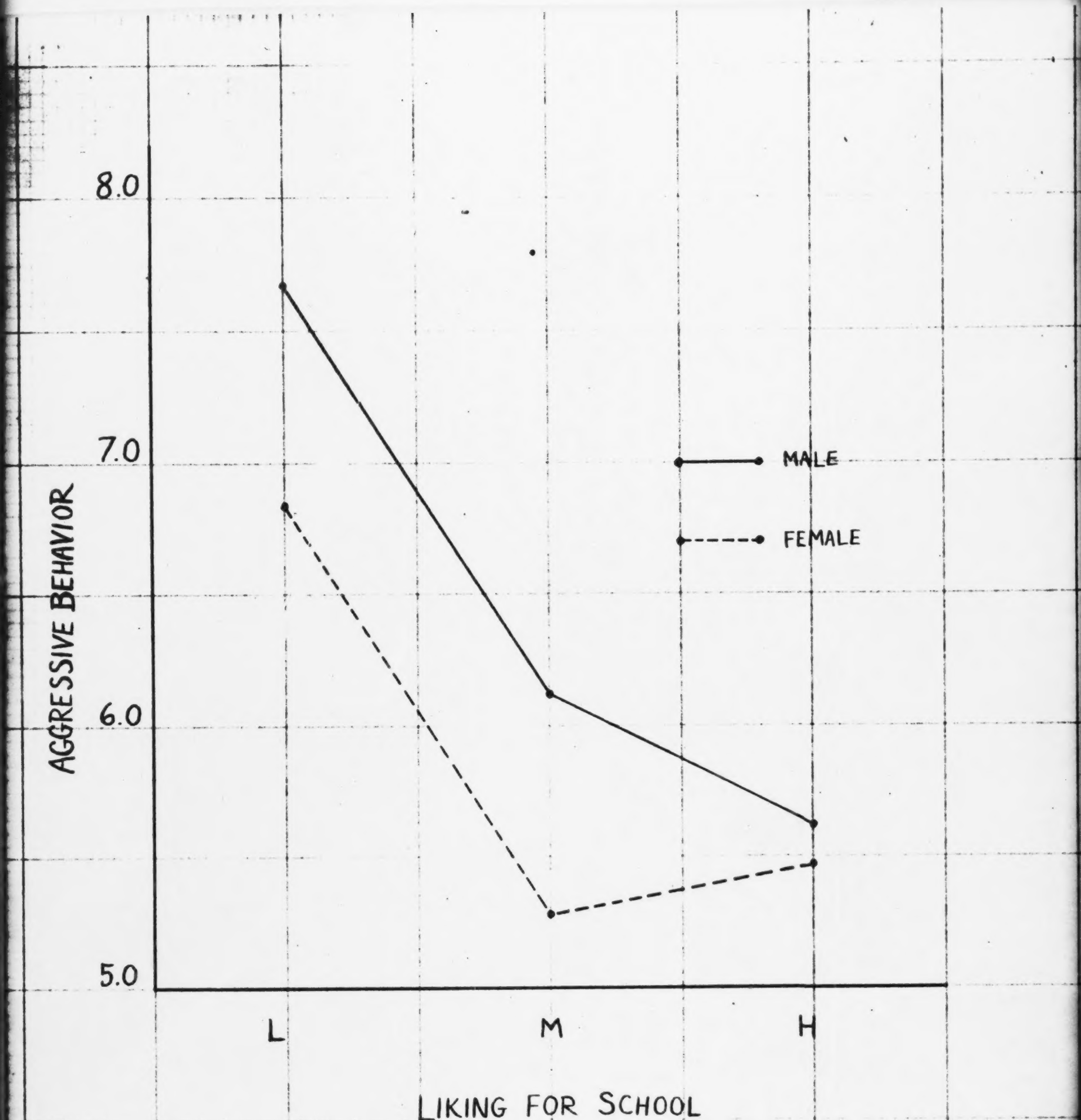
EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION

FIGURE 2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AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
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FEMALE
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M
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LIKING FOR SCHOOL

FIGURE 3